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ABSTRACT

To address the questions of whether writers create their audiences and, if so, how, a case study of three skilled student writers sought to elicit the students' tacitly held knowledge about composing and audience. The students wrote an essay that they were told would be published in a campus anthology, and then responded to questions in taped "ethnographic" interviews an average of six times, discussing essay drafts brought to the meetings. Students also listed their composing decisions and grouped them. Each student's material was separately analyzed by marking off, comparing, and grouping all reader-related episodes and from this the descriptions and hypotheses for the research were developed. Analysis showed that the writers allowed their audience to change as it assimilated itself to their purpose and that the newly evolved audience was an idealized version of the writers' selves. Writers need not always analyze and accommodate a uniform audience, but rather, they should write effective prose for a broad, indefinite, and unknown audience. From a pedagogical standpoint, writing for a general audience encourages varied perspectives and more in-depth exploration of the subject. (SRT)

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THE EVOLVING AUDIENCE:
ALTERNATIVES TO AUDIENCE ACCOMMODATION
IN THE COMPOSING PROCESSES
OF SKILLED COLLEGE WRITERS

Abstract

Rhetoricians and composing scholars have become increasingly interested in the idea that writers create their audiences as well as accommodate them, that audiences can be "invoked" as well as "addressed." This study gathers data useful in exploring the pedagogical implications of this idea. Do proficient student writers create their audiences? If so, what strategies are involved? To answer these questions, discourse-based interviews were conducted with three skilled student writers during the weeks they were engaged in writing a full-length essay for publication. Viewed as ethnographic "informants," the students were allowed to establish the relevant issues themselves and to uncover, through reflection, their own tacitly held knowledge about composing.

This procedure revealed several strategies the writers used to compose rhetorically effective prose without accommodating a given audience: revising the audience, writing for the "reader in general," rereading in the "role of the other," convincing oneself, and addressing ideal readers. Two of the writers explicitly modified and extended their original audience representations until definitions more consistent with their own needs evolved. They also considered the whole range of potential readers and addressed multiple audiences. Finally, as they composed, and new audience representations gradually emerged, their newly-created readers resembled themselves. They were addressing invented readers who were idealized self projections.

PURPOSE

While such literary theorists as Wolfgang Iser (1974, 1978) and Louise Rosenblatt (1978) have been demonstrating the many ways readers actively construct the meanings of a written text, teachers of writing have become increasingly interested in what may be a corresponding process: the ways writers actively construct their audiences. Composing scholars and rhetoricians, questioning the traditional emphasis on adapting a text to a predetermined audience, are suggesting that writers may create their audiences as well as accommodate them, that audiences can be "invoked" as well as "addressed" (Ong, 1975; Long, 1980; Park, 1982; and Ede & Lunsford, 1984). "The process of imagining a reader," says George Dillon, is "not an attempt to approximate the knowledge and viewpoint of actual persons" but a process of "projecting a self that readers will try on and find agreeable" (1981, p. 164). The possibility that a writer's audience may be more protean and malleable than we normally assume has suggested the study presented here. If one's audience may emerge during composing, we are no longer looking at a static entity: we can consider how it changes as composing proceeds--and what writers do to make it change. One purpose of the study was to learn more about the dynamics of the process by which writers create audiences.

More broadly, the goal was to learn how successful student writers manage to write rhetorically powerful essays without a well-defined audience. In composition classes, students are

frequently advised to address their essays to a "general audience" of "educated readers." How does one analyze and accommodate such a diverse, broadly defined audience? Recent research suggests that student writers tend to see their audiences as vague and indefinite, as "the reader" or "whoever reads it" (Odell, Goswami and Quick, 1983), and data in the present study corroborate this. Yet some students do write rhetorically effective essays even while addressing a very broadly defined audience. Indeed, successfully addressing a broad, public audience is one indicator of rhetorical maturity in the writer (Britton et al., 1975). So some of our ablest students may at times write well without having a very distinct sense of just who their real-world audiences are. Surely textbook injunctions to define, analyze, and accommodate one's audience at the beginning of the composing process are of limited usefulness in this context. A second purpose of the research, then, was to discover what alternative strategies good student writers use to maintain a strong sense of audience.

It is well established that proficient writers, when faced with a well-defined, real-world communicative or persuasive writing task, will adapt their texts to their audiences more than less proficient or younger writers will (Kroll, 1978; Rubin & Piche, 1979; Atlas, 1979; and Flower & Hayes, 1980). Perhaps for this reason, much of the empirical research into the role of audience in written discourse has focused on such issues as whether writers consider their particular audiences, how they adapt their texts to these well-defined audiences, and how

audience adaptation skills develop with age. Such studies have tended to consider writing tasks in which the audience, the writing purpose, or both were well-defined for the writer beforehand. They have not considered writing behavior during tasks that are common enough in composition courses: the writing of a full-length public essay or of an essay for which the writer determines his or her own communicative purpose. The concern has usually been audience accommodation alone; audience as an entity that may evolve as composing proceeds has not been considered.

Providing needed empirical research into writers' audience-creation strategies, the present study investigates how proficient student writers think about audience when they write a full-length essay for publication with a minimum of laboratory constraints. The controlling questions have been:

> Do these writers sometimes create their audiences during composing--and, if so, how?
>
> What strategies do such writers use to write rhetorically effective prose when addressing a broad public audience?

The central aim has been to discover the alternatives to audience accommodation in the practice of skilled student writers.

DESIGN

To investigate audience invention, three skilled student writers[1] were interviewed during the weeks they were

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[1] Including two pilot-study subjects and three others eliminated due to incomplete or unreliable data, the investigator actually worked with eight such students to gather the three sets of data used in the final study.

composing essays for publication on campus. Each student was asked to write an essay on whatever subject he or she wished and was told that the essay would be published in an anthology distributed across campus, primarily through freshman English classes. I met with each student an average of six times, roughly once a week during a six-week period, and at each of these meetings discourse-based interviews of an hour to an hour and a half were taped. The students brought to each meeting all essay drafts and any other written prefigurings they had produced since the previous meeting. These materials were discussed immediately and copies made for later reference.

The writers were unusually capable, independent student writers at a mid-sized community college. Each was so identified by two experienced college writing teachers who had known them as students and as writers for at least one semester, and I independently verified this impression. At the time of the study, Laura was twenty-one, Johanna twenty-five, and David twenty-eight. Johanna had been feature editor of the school newspaper and had just been awarded her college's award for overall excellence in English. Laura had independently written poetry, research papers, and political statements. David had just started writing for the school newspaper. All three students had kept personal journals regularly or on and off for years.

Qualitative Research

As is common in social science research (Smith, 1979), including recent research in the teaching of English (Kantor et

al., 1981), this study employs a qualitative research strategy, one that combines case study design with ethnographic data gathering. In such research, though the investigator may begin with a theory to refine (Schatzmann & Strauss, 1973), the part played by any predetermined hypothesis is kept to a minimum (Wilson, 1977). The aim is not to verify a hypothesis, but to uncover new information about complex human behaviors and to generate new hypotheses about them (Kantor et al., 1981). Experimental studies are appropriate when well-defined, competing hypotheses about quantifiable phenomena exist and the goal is to determine which hypothesis precisely fits the facts. In the present inquiry, however, that was not the case. Audience accommodation and audience invention theories are not necessarily mutually exclusive nor even incompatible (Ede & Lunsford, 1984), nor do they constitute well-defined hypotheses about quantifiable phenomena. The central questions could be answered only through observational studies in which the investigator does not systematically exclude too much beforehand.

What was called for, then, were qualitative methods that would allow categories to gradually emerge during the research process. Instead of defining beforehand just what constitutes relevant data, ethnographers elicit much data only broadly related to the field of inquiry and later determine what is relevant as they become more familiar with the context (Wilson, 1977). Hypothesis generation and theory development are more likely to occur when the investigator can seek patterns in rich, detailed data rather than looking only for the presence or lack

of fit between restricted data and pre-established constructs. Such an approach was appropriate in the present study since the aim was to collect detailed data about how proficient, independent student writers think about audience when writing a public essay. Such data, it was assumed, would be likely to point to concrete and practicable ways of talking about audience invention and would provide the basis for generating significant hypotheses about the role of audience in the composing process. Data was collected therefore using ethnographic interview techniques described by Spradley (1979) and Mathiot (1980). I first set out to learn all I could about the composing decisions the student writers made, and I usually determined interview questions only after seeing the drafts students brought to the interviews and after hearing how they responded to broad preliminary questions.

The Ethnographic Interviews

From the outset, then, the students were viewed as ethnographic "informants." They were told that I was working with them because of their knowledge of writing, that I saw them as experts I wished to learn from and not as "subjects" to be impersonally examined. Whenever relevant, I reiterated that I wanted to learn from them whatever they knew that might be new to me. And, during the early interviews and even sometimes later, care was taken to ask open-ended questions aimed at letting the students establish the relevant concerns and terms: "What have you been working on?" "What was the biggest problem you had with this?" "Why did you make this change?" "What do you think you'll

do next?" More restrictive questions were asked only once the writer had already begun to define an area of concern.

There was evidence that I was able to establish the desired rapport. One student, Johanna, who commented on how "easy" it was to speak to me, frequently spoke on at great length and with remarkable sophistication when for stimulus she had only such a vague question as "What've you been doing?" Often I had only to repeat a word or phrase Johanna had just used and she would look back at it, clarifying, qualifying, or extending her preliminary statement. Another student, Laura, even made explicit that she was on a journey of discovery during the discussions. Occasionally, after answering a question she would comment, "But I never would have realized that if you hadn't asked me" or "You know, I never thought of it that way before, but that's true." Through reflection, these student informants were uncovering their own tacitly held knowledge about composing.

What composing issues were discussed during these interviews? Quite simply, everything the student cared to discuss. To avoid unintentionally directing undue attention to audience-related issues alone, I did not limit interest to or in any way emphasize such issues. Indeed, because it really was not feasible to tell at the outset just what composing decisions, behaviors, or considerations would turn out to be reader related, I purposely set out to find out as much as possible about whatever concerned the students while they were working on an essay. In this way, too, the naturalistic context essential to effective ethnographic inquiry was maintained.

Method of Analysis

As often happens in ethnographic research, the preliminary analysis took place during data gathering, with the help of the student writers themselves. By asking the students about their notes, drafts, and revisions, I encouraged them to articulate their underlying concerns as writers, their intentions as they struggled with various composing decisions. As such concerns emerged, I asked informants to verify and clarify them, eventually compiling lists, which were then further verified and clarified. Finally, students considered different ways the concerns, transcribed onto 3x5 index cards, could be grouped so that unexpressed relationships among them might come to light.

This procedure resulted in more than 800 pages of transcripts, representing about 30 hours of interview time; well over 125 pages of notes, drafts, and other student writing; and detailed lists of composing concerns for each student writer. At this point, the materials from each student were analyzed separately. First, all reader-related episodes (references in the transcripts to readers and audience) were marked off, compared, and grouped. These included not only times the student directly mentioned "the reader," "someone reading this," or "my audience," but also such indirect references as mention of "freshmen" or particular teachers the writer assumed might be reading the essay. Indirect references also included mention of what "people" might think, or why "I wouldn't like that [if I were reading this]," and so forth. Of course, references to actual readers--people to whom the students had either shown

drafts of their essays or with whom they had discussed their ideas--were also noted. Finally, related references in early journal entries were added.

This data was then probed for answers to such central questions as these: How did the writer represent the audience to himself or herself? Did this audience representation change? What reader-related composing strategies were used? Only after each student's data had been thoroughly examined separately were cross-student comparisons made and these questions about audience reconsidered in this broader context. In this way was gathered the primary evidence used in developing the descriptions and hypotheses presented here.

The credibility of ethnographic studies is determined to a large extent by the care with which the natural context has been maintained, the thoroughness with which the investigator describes this context, the detail in which the data is presented, and the care with which the investigator has maintained a variable perspective on the data and has triangulated data sources (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). In this study, data sources were triangulated in several ways. Because students were interviewed in depth and regularly over several weeks, their comments at one interview could be cross-checked for meaning and consistency with their comments in other contexts and at other interviews. Because all notes, drafts, and revisions were obtained, interview statements could be placed in the context of this concrete evidence. And since the students were asked to verify and group concerns, I could further compare and

verify emerging theoretical constructs. Cross-student comparisons provided the final means of verification.

FINDINGS

Findings in this study are presented in the form of descriptions of the individual students' reader-related composing strategies, often couched in the students' own language and verified by their own statements as they reflected upon their composing concerns. The power of ethnographic research lies in the ethnographer's in-depth knowledge of informants and in the richly detailed data that results. As in all case study research, care must be taken in generalizing upon the behavior of a limited number of students. The purpose of this study was not to find strategies that all writers must use, nor to produce an exhaustive list of such strategies. The purpose was to discover what approaches these successful writers did use, describe them in detail, and generate hypotheses regarding their likely usefulness to other writers.

Revising the Audience

Did the three skilled student writers create their audiences as they wrote? Laura and Johanna certainly did, as we shall see. What of David? If writing a purposeful, rhetorically effective essay without ever consciously defining an external audience necessitates creating one's own audience, then David did too. Working hard and long on a partly fictionalized narrative essay decrying the dehumanizing treatment of old people

institutionalized in convalescent homes, David consistently thought in terms of the effect of the writing on himself and not on another reader. Except when pressed, he never referred, as Laura and Johanna often did, to either an audience or "the reader." When finally asked about this, he replied: "I don't know who my reader is. Myself, I guess. I'm writing it hoping it will get me to do something." Yet he wrote and rewrote many passages to make them vivid and dramatic ("real" and "believable" were his terms), he expunged material that would not "fit my point," and he worked to give the essay a convincing shape.

In Laura's and Johanna's cases, audience creation was more explicit: both writers dramatically modified their preliminary audience representations as they worked on their essays. Laura started out thinking of her readers as typical students at her community college, students she saw as basically uninformed, illiberal, and politically apathetic. These readers she wished to inform about what she saw as the inhumane effects of American foreign policy. As composing progressed, however, she came to include in her audience readers she saw in terms suggesting a complete contrast with this original audience representation. These readers were her "peers, politically," people she saw as liberal, politically knowledgeable and "concerned," and whom she thought of as her "sisters."

Laura never entirely substituted this more congenial audience for her original one. Yet her audience representation clearly evolved in this direction, a fact she herself made explicit: "I want to appeal to as many readers as possible," she said, "but,

with a paper like this, I'm more interested in, well, 'social acceptance' by my immediate peers. And I don't mean my age group. Basically in the field of liberal politics." She explained that earlier "that wasn't true. I wanted to appeal to people who weren't [politically liberal] and try to get a point across. And I was afraid that they would reject anything that was too radical. But I don't feel that way now. I'd rather be accepted by the people who agree with the basic ideology of the paper."

Johanna carried out a similar programme of audience enlargement as she composed. She started out thinking, rather ruefully, of her intended readers as "churlish, ignominious freshmen befouled with late adolescent density." Yet she did want to "get a point across" to these freshmen. Later she described her readers as "college educated or in the process of becoming college educated." And by the end her audience representation included not only the reader "you're hoping will want to come up to your level" but also her "superior reader," whom she thought of as very knowledgeable and very demanding. This new reader, also called the "highest reader" in contrast to the "lowest reader," was more of an idealization that only gradually emerged: "He's my nameless, faceless reader that is held up as a kind of a--if I can get him, I can get anybody." Johanna envisaged him as intelligent, literary, and sophisticated--very critical, yet also ready to reexamine his own reasoning.

While Johanna knew that she was writing her essay for

publication in a collection to be distributed to freshman English classes, she kept in mind the possibility that it might eventually find an audience beyond that immediate one. At one point, she spoke of the writing doing "triple duty": she was simultaneously "writing for this project," "conceivably get[ting] myself an article," and "trying to find out what [I] believe and why [I] believe it." In other words, she saw herself as writing for three audiences at once: those typically "dense" freshmen; a wider, more highly-educated audience of people who might read the essay if it were published beyond the college campus; and herself as she tried to learn more about her own beliefs. In this way Johanna gradually extended her audience to include a much broader spectrum of readers.

An early phase in Johanna's audience revision process was her practice of addressing the reader's best self. She addressed more what she hoped for in her readers than what she expected would always be there. She did not entirely ignore those freshmen in whose intelligence and capabilities she had so little faith, but neither did she address such readers in terms of the qualities she expected most of them to possess. Instead, she assumed she could challenge them to think a little harder and read a little better than they might have been used to doing. "They may have to go on tiptoe to reach it," she remarked. As long as she had made sure that her essay was clear when she gave it her own demanding reading, then the rest was up to the reader. At one point Johanna even made explicit the fact that such a position involved her in a strange paradox: she had to assume

something she knew was not really so. "Well," she explained, "I'm assuming my reader is more intelligent than he probably is, my average reader." To create one's own audience, then--in this instance at any rate--is in part to reshape one's audience representation around a kind of idealized version of itself.

Both Laura and Johanna gradually revised their audience representations until audience definitions more consistent with their own needs evolved. One very basic alternative to audience accommodation, then, is what we might call a process of audience assimilation: let your audience gradually change as it assimilates itself to your purposes as a writer. This is not only a matter of revising your goals with regard to a pre-determined audience. It may also involve changing the audience conception itself.

Addressing the Ideal Self

Interestingly, as Laura and Johanna composed, and new audience representations gradually emerged, their newly created readers resembled themselves. Laura's image moved away from a hostile, unsympathetic audience toward one made up of her "sisters." These "sisters" were, like Laura herself, politically liberal, concerned about the suffering of others throughout the world, and very sympathetic to radical popular political movements. Similarly, Johanna's "superior reader" was, like herself, knowledgeable, highly literate, and a very demanding and critical reader: he was more comfortable doing intellectual battle than finding easy but boring acquiescence. Creating one's audience may mean projecting a kind of ideal reader out there who

is in essence one's own best self.

That writers, even when writing publicly, might address an invented ideal audience is suggested by Hawthorne's comments in his preface to The Marble Faun. There he speaks of addressing such prefaces "nominally to the Public at large, but really to that ... all-sympathizing critic ... whom an author never actually meets, but to whom he implicitly makes his appeal." Hawthorne sees this reader as the "representative essence of all delightful and desirable qualities which a reader can possess" and implies that the writer must take the existence of such a reader on faith alone.

Hawthorne's sympathetic reader, "closer and kinder than a brother," is much like Laura's "sisters" audience. But what of Johanna's "superior reader," who was not nearly so gentle? Indeed, he was "the hardest person I think I'm going to come up against to read something like this." Johanna's ideal reader was more like the imagined audience Yeats speaks of in "The Fisherman":

> Suddenly I began,
> In scorn of this audience,
> Imagining a man ...
> A man who does not exist,
> A man who is but a dream;
> And cried, 'Before I am old
> I shall have written him one
> Poem maybe as cold
> And passionate as the dawn.'

Like Yeats, Johanna discovered her ideal reader as a result of turning away scornfully from what she saw as a less worthy

audience. Also like the poet, Johanna saw her new reader as an uncommon, highly disciplined reader who could provoke the best from oneself. Laura's and Johanna's ideal readers differed from one another because the writers themselves do.

Thus, a fascinating phenomenon emerges from the revelations of these student informants: As a writer extends his or her audience, this expanded "other" may meet the self. As we gain a clearer sense of our own writing purposes, as we begin to see them solidify and take shape, we often discover more and more common ground with our readers. We discover that we and they are not so far apart after all. In this sense at least, a writer's audience may develop during composing. Just as the purposes and meanings of an essay grow and change as composing continues, a writer's audience may evolve as well. And this newly evolved audience will sometimes be an idealized version of the writer's self.

Writing Publicly

When addressing a specifiable audience, experienced writers analyze and accommodate that audience (Rubin & Piche, 1979, and Flower & Hayes, 1980). According to Carol Berkenkotter (1981), for example, expert writers represent the audience to themselves, at first broadly and then gradually more narrowly, using this representation as a "touchstone" by which to test various composing decisions. Yet when attempting to appeal to a fairly wide, public audience, it may not be advisable or even possible to proceed in this way. In fact, writing a public essay is largely a matter of addressing many different, unknown readers.

As George Dillon points out, "By convention, the expository essay is unsituated to an extreme degree: the reader and writer do not know each other, communicate only via the written page, and are not members of any special group" (1981, p. 25). It is not surprising, then, that the proficient writers in this study tended to keep their audiences rather indefinite: flexible, multi-dimensioned, and variable. By doing so, they geared themselves finally to the public at large.

Writing for the Reader in General

How did the students write rhetorically effective prose under such circumstances? What did they use as alternative touchstones? For one thing, they considered many different potential readers at different times and in different contexts, a strategy discussed more fully below. For another, they often reread their own texts in what Mead (1934) calls "the role of the other." That is, they tested the effects of their words on themselves while rereading objectively and openly. "If you're not fully open to [your text during rereading]," Johanna explained, "you're going to gloss over something that's bad, ... and what might potentially be good you're going to miss entirely." Ultimately, they wrote for someone they called "the reader in general," a character who has no necessary connection with any definable set of people for whom a particular essay might be intended. Throughout most of our interviews they tended to speak of "the reader," "whoever reads it," what "most people would think," "anybody reading this," and so forth.

In practice, writing for the reader in general often meant

considering the whole range of potential readers. As we have seen, Johanna gave thought to both the "lowest" and the "highest reader" while writing her essay. At times she saw this as a way of encompassing all possible readers: "Well, I take in actually the lowest and the highest, and whoever falls in between is just going to get caught up in it one way or the other. So, you know, kind of like something that will appeal to everyone." In fact Johanna showed a marked propensity for trying to allow for a variety of possibilities. Often she would say such things as "See, now that's another way you could take it." It was important to her to explicitly recall that readers will differ, that "everyone views it a little bit differently." She explained: "We're not talking about automatons: we're talking about people. And people have all different reasons, and all different points of view, for agreeing with you or disagreeing with you." Johanna purposely kept her audience definition as open as possible, thereby considering as many different readers as she could.

A strategy Johanna used to make her aware of potential perspectives was "finding something to bump up against." That is, she challenged herself to examine her own position in the light of possible opposing viewpoints.

> You need conflict.... you have to come up to the other point of view that you don't agree with and find something to bump up against. It rubs, it flakes off all the junk that's stuck to your topic and forces you to see the truth for what it is and how well it stands out. It also gives you some kind of an emotional charge inside that helps you, that makes it easier to write.

Such a strategy was consistent with Johanna's tendency to

consider a broad range of potential reader responses. To be "prepared for whatever is going to come along," she explained, "you take every conceivable position." She was not assessing her audience, however, but taking critical perspectives on her own beliefs. Yet she was hardly "topic bound" (see Berkenkotter, 1981); she was simply exploring her own thinking more deeply. If Johanna had limited herself to a more specifiable audience and had geared her arguments more directly to those readers alone, she might have made such critical perspectives and deeper thinking irrelevant. But she did not. Instead, she addressed herself to a broad, public audience, and, since such an audience is by its very nature indefinite, she had to create the challenge herself by "finding something to bump up against," regardless of who her actual readers might turn out to be.

Laura, too, considered a wide range of potential reader responses, hostile and sympathetic, ignorant and knowledgeable. The readers or reader-types whose actual or imagined responses she thought about included a fellow student whose writing ability she respected and to whom she showed a draft, her English Composition teacher from the previous semester, a more liberal teacher, typical student readers and other fellow students, readers likely to banish her to Russia, friends, and fellow activists. Usually, however, she thought only in terms of "whoever reads it" or the "reader in general," considering such basic communication issues as clarity, organization, and arrangement. For example, she often worked to be sure that her words did not "get off the track" and cause readers to "keep

having to refer back to follow what the writer is saying." And she was characteristically concerned with what we could call 'affability,' that is, not insulting, losing, or confusing any potential reader. Laura wanted to appeal to as many readers as she could.

Both Johanna and Laura at times considered different readers' responses to the same words. For example, Johanna wrote what she called "a conclusion with punch," not only so that a naive reader would find it "memorable" and would "walk away with edification," but also so that a thoughtfully critical reader might be "forced to think about why he disagreed." The same composing strategy was directed to more than one reader type at the same time. Similarly, when Laura apologized in a footnote for having neglected to mention such "oppressed" groups as "the Greeks, Chileans, and Indians," her primary addressees were her more "politically concerned" readers. Yet she noted that the footnote would also serve the purpose of letting less well-informed readers know that "there are many more countries than I've included." She liked the fact that the same words could "serve both purposes." Like Johanna, Laura addressed multiple audiences.

Convincing Oneself

Another way these students wrote effectively while addressing a broad unknown audience was actually to reduce the influence of the external audience by writing at times more for themselves than for others. Both Johanna and David made this explicit. Johanna's suggestive term for the reader thus reduced was

"peripheral." She might want to notice him indirectly every once in awhile, but her focal awareness was on other matters. Thus she frequently had to make judgements based on her own reading of her text or on her own concerns as a reader. "You know the effect it has on you," she explained. "You assume it's going to have that effect on any person picking it up.... If you have to start worrying about the effect it's going to have on every person who's going to read it, you will go nuts." At the final interview, she spoke of "the very basic level of me as reader of what I'm writing." She explained: "These are all concerns of mine.... I'm writing something hoping someone's going to read it. But I'm not overly reader concerned. These are almost me. I'm taking me and dividing me up into reader." For Johanna, the reader as a person or group of people distinct from the writer-as-reader remains out on the fringes.

Johanna wrote for herself also in order to generate ideas and to develop them. Several times she spoke of writing "to find out what you believe and why you believe it." Now this was partly to better anticipate and deal with different potential responses: it was a "defensive" argumentative strategy. But part of it was also literally to find out, to know: "to find out something about things that you take for granted." This was abundantly clear from her lengthy exploratory writing, in which she took on, with striking intensity, a great many huge existential issues: the question of whether "we have control over our own lives," the question of the existence of God, and so forth. Johanna was using herself as audience in order to explore her subject and

discover what she had to say. She described this as "following out the thread of my own thought." It was a matter of having the self-discipline to stay with one line of thought long enough to find out just where it might take her.

Laura too limited the power of her immediate audience. She was blocked at first, worrying that what she wished to say might be "too radical" for what she saw as her politically conservative audience. But she finally managed to discount such concerns enough to focus on what she wanted to say. After struggling for some time over the "resistance" and general lack of interest she anticipated, she finally put together a 'engthy if partial draft that she was quite pleased with. Her description of how she had done so points to what one might call the "heck-with-them" phenomenon:

> "To me, this paper is too radical to give to most professors. Professor Brown I probably would have no hesitation giving it to, but there are quite a few professors I can think of that I wouldn't. And I think last week we talked about how I didn't want it to be too radical or whatever. And I did--last Friday afternoon when I wrote these first three pages--I just said, 'To hell with it! I mean, I'm gonna write what I want to write. I don't care any more.' And I was ecstatic. When I typed out those first three pages in no time at all, it made my day. I was just really pleased with what I'd put down."

Laura had unblocked herself by giving herself the right to minimize the need to accommodate the particular readers she saw as comprising her audience.

Even as she continued to extend and rework this draft, a similar process was evident. While Laura made many specific revisions to accommodate what she saw as a relatively uncongenial audience, some revisions were also aimed at undoing such

accommodations. The most blatant example was her decision to drop as "too apologetic" an ending she had written aimed at readers who might find her stance too militant and unpatriotic. Laura's considering her audience often involved balancing the need to address an uncongenial audience against other needs, including more self-directed ones. A criterion for making composing decisions that she returned to frequently was implicit personal belief: "Is it saying what I really believe?" "Is this something I can totally agree with?" In applying this believability criterion, Laura was not testing for another's likely response to her words but directly checking their truth value for herself, testing to see whether she found them convincing.

Writers might also see themselves literally as their own audiences. That is, though such writers know they will show the essay to others, they are most concerned with how both the words and the process of writing them will affect themselves. David was literally writing for himself: he could think of no way of describing his reader except in terms of himself. He spoke of hoping the writing of his essay would get him to change his own behavior--that is, get him to do more for old people neglected in poorly-run nursing homes. He also explained that he had to write about something "that really matters to me." This subject, it gradually came out, was connected with feelings he had regarding a kind of moral debt owed to a grandmother who had lived in an old-age home. David was clearly satisfying some inner need in writing on this subject.

In Personal Knowledge, Michael Polanyi says, "To the question of 'Who is addressing whom here?' [the answer is] simply, 'I am trying to convince myself'" (1958, p. 265). And he claims that his whole argument in this lengthy and complex study is "a systematic course in teaching myself to hold my own beliefs" (p. 299). Johanna, Laura, and David were all, each in his or her own way, doing just this: teaching themselves to hold their own beliefs. They were struggling to both objectify--and thus validate, convince themselves of the truth of--those beliefs. Johanna emphasized the exploratory pole here; Laura the need to persuade others, to verify one's claims; and David the need to make feelings more "real" and "believable" by objectifying them into a dramatic "picture." But they were all working in earnest to write effectively in order to convince themselves.

IMPLICATIONS

Writers need not always analyze and accommodate a uniform audience; they may write rhetorically effective prose while still maintaining relatively indefinite audience representations. Invited to write essays for publication, the skilled writers in this study anticipated the responses of a variety of different readers at different times, often writing for anyone who might become the reader of the text. They addressed multiple audiences, including imagined readers who were essentially self projections. When given the freedom to choose for themselves, successful student writers might not define an intended audience

beyond the self at all. And if they do, they might not always adapt their discourse to that particular audience.

Audience was treated as subject to revision by these writers and thus became something that could gradually evolve. An essayist's audience may be as much an entity created during composing as one that he or she discovers in the real world and then addresses. Indeed, capable writers may be more likely to end up with very different audiences in mind than the ones they started with. The changes found in this study were not simply fuller elaborations of the writers' preliminary audience representations. Rather, real changes of direction occurred and new entities appeared.

Pedagogical Implications

There are many occasions when writers can clarify to themselves their purposes in writing only by first creating a lively picture of their intended readers. Yet, if we view the writer's audience solely as a group of real-world readers external to and predating a text, we may inadvertently reduce the complex problem of audience awareness to one of audience analysis alone, thereby misleading writing students. When we speak of a student lacking a "sense of audience," for example, we may be referring to the writer's failure to create an appropriate rhetorical context for readers, or to a lack of knowledge of the conventions of a specific genre (see Park, 1982). Yet our shorthand method of expressing this may be to tell the student to "remember your reader." In any case, if student writers are to shape roles for their readers to enact, they will be hindered by

rigid predefinitions of the audience. They may need to discover their own audiences and to redefine them as they go along.

We can use our knowledge of the audience creation strategies proficient student writers use to help guide other students. It will help many students, for example, to know that successful student writers often consider the whole range of potential readers, that they project roles for readers, and especially that they give themselves the right to address audiences selectively at times, to write for the reader's "best self" and to address an ideal reader. Most surprisingly, a shrewd strategy for getting a hearing from others may be to write for oneself rather than addressing an external audience at all. This is what David saw himself doing, just as novelist Madeleine L'Engel (1985), even in writing non-fiction, says she sees herself as "telling myself things I need to remember" rather than keeping a particular audience in mind. Eventually Johanna and Laura found themselves addressing ideal readers who were clearly self-projections.

Advice to define and accommodate "the" audience can be especially confusing in contexts in which the appropriate audience is one that cannot be defined very well. Yet our goal may well be to enable students to write for such an indefinite audience. James Britton points out that the ability to address a "broad public audience" indicates independence and maturity in a writer; he therefore questions the value of writing pedagogies that do not encourage students to often address just such a broad audience (Britton et al., 1975). Park too claims that ordinarily we want students to learn to write for "a 'general' audience"--to

write in "relatively unstructured situations where little is given in the way of context and much remains to be invented by the writer" (1982, p. 256). Writing for a more general audience, because it encourages writers to search for varied perspectives, may lead them to explore their material more deeply, while writing for a narrower audience may stifle any tendency to achieve new insights or to find more complex integrations of the material at hand (Roth, 1983). As writing teachers, we look to the truthfulness of what is presented as well as to the effectiveness of the presentation, a fact well conveyed by Wayne Booth's definition of rhetoric as "the art of discovering good reasons" (Booth, 1974). Frequently, therefore, we want students to address a public audience that in fact cannot be more narrowly defined. "Audience" in such a case may be best conceived as many different readers.

Theoretical Implications

For writers, subject, purpose, and audience do not appear in isolation from one another. In this study the writers' concerns about readers were difficult to sort out because during composing the writers conceived of audience as embedded in such active constructs as "having an impact," "making the point," "backing it up," "saying something new," "teasing the reader," "evoking images," and "having a clear line of thought," constructs that involved interactions among the basic elements in the rhetorical situation, subject, audience, and purpose. In fact, as capable writers compose, these elements inform one another. By thinking about their readers, such writers clarify their purposes and

subjects to themselves. But by thinking about their subjects and purposes, they also engender new audience representations.

Revising for audience is more complex than we may have thought: it includes assimilatory moves and strategies that do not involve analyzing a predetermined audience. Essential to shaping a text is the ability to "project the experience of the reader qua reader" (Dillon, 1981, p. 164). Laura made many revisions anticipating the likely attitudes of people she expected to read her essay. However, she also made other revisions by projecting the experience of anyone who might become a reader of her text. She made certain substitutions, for example, because she saw them as more likely to enhance the empathic response she was hoping for. In doing so, Laura was in the process of creating an as yet inchoate audience, not accommodating a pre-existent one. Yet we tend to use the term "audience" to refer, in hodge-podge fashion, to both the addressed audience that may be analyzed and to the imagined and indefinite character Laura referred to as "the reader in general."

There is a broader range of audience conceptions afoot as writers compose than audience-analysis approaches can account for. Writers may see their audiences as subject to revision and as indefinite and multi-layered, and they may also, in other contexts or when writing in other modes, see the audience as fixed and definite. They may even see the audience in both ways during the composing of the same text. Teachers of composition will therefore wish to consider the valid alternatives available, including strategies for creating one's audience.

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